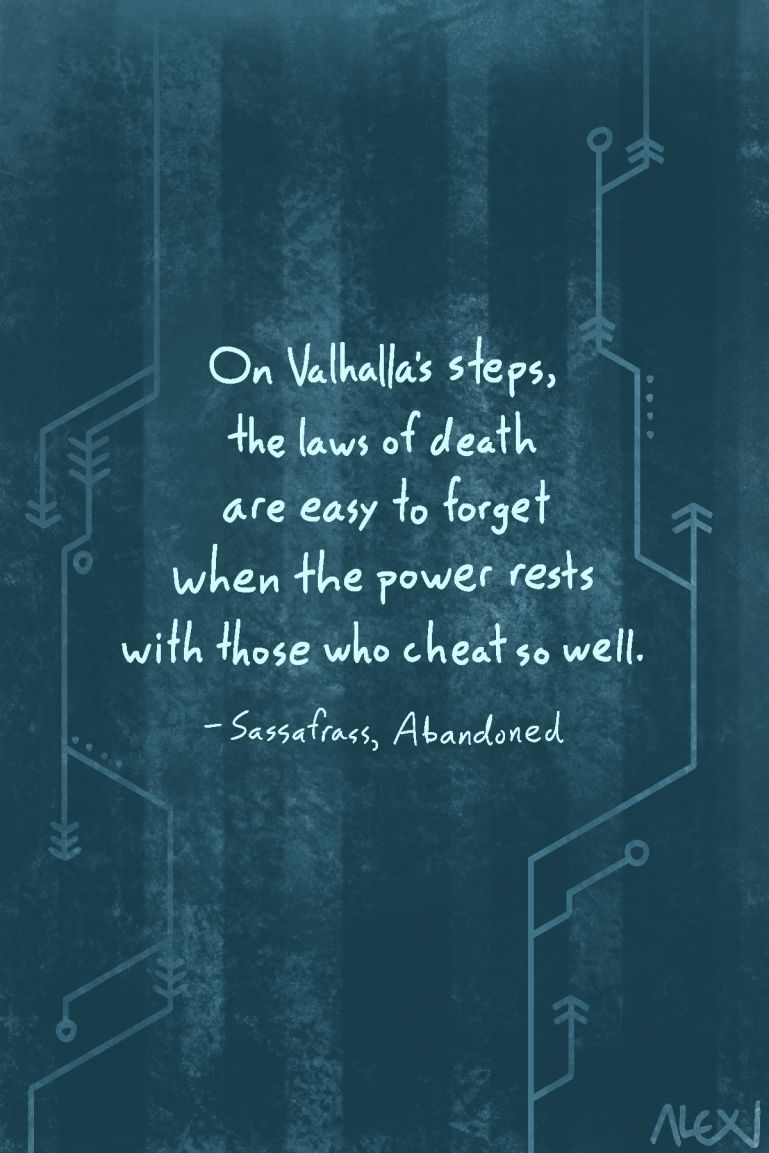


# SOLIPSCHISM

## SIDE A



ALEX



On Valhalla's steps,  
the laws of death  
are easy to forget  
when the power rests  
with those who cheat so well.

- Sassafraass, Abandoned

ALEXI



# SIDE A.



be-BEEP! be-BEEP!

MARKUS B [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

9/[REDACTED]/2[REDACTED]-3/[REDACTED]/2[REDACTED]

Recovered 7/24/[REDACTED]

Base phenotype XX-YY-Q1 [REDACTED] Zx

Diff log CALL

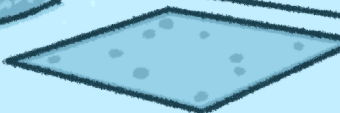
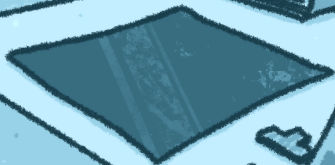
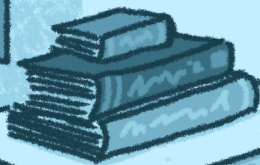
Base neurotype [REDACTED]

Pending reconciliation

0111X  
:::



bip



163V

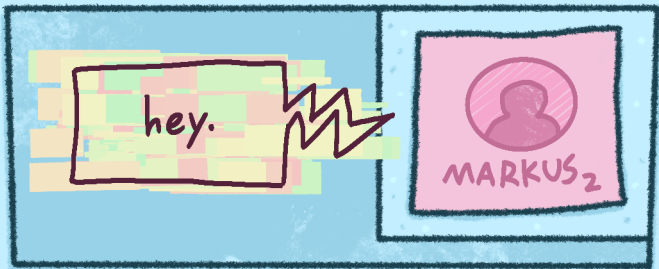


MSX

(ggghhghggghghgh.)

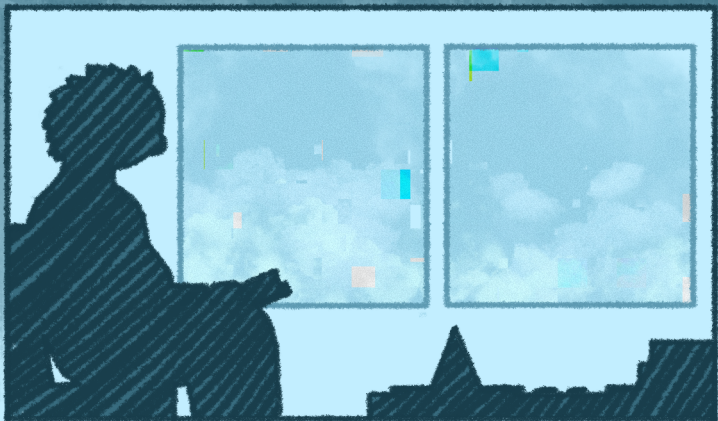


CALL  
OVERRIDE  
BZZZZZZT









Yeah.

Wasn't as bad  
as I thought -



I was mostly  
wondering,  
"Are there two  
Markuses now,  
or three?"





Please, the  
term is  
"Markii."



snrk



Now, I'm  
curious...



How'd I get this  
scar on my ankle?

Unicycle accident  
when we were seven.



WE

NEX



...You there?



Yeah. Fine.

Why do mashed potatoes  
make m- us nauseous,  
when we're not allergic?

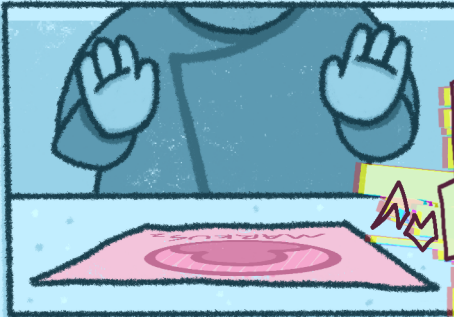
We demanded them every day when  
we were four, until we got a rotten batch.

Why are we anxious around palm trees?

In college, we-

Are you testing me?

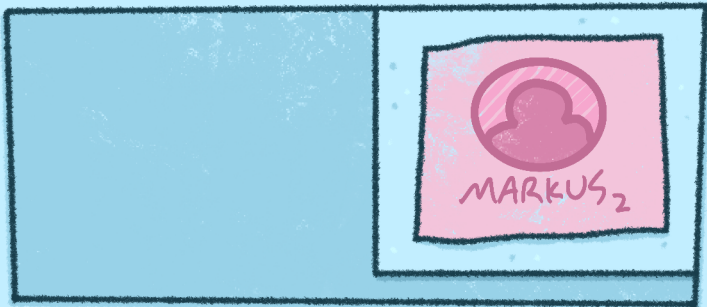




Sorry, I-

I'm not a fucking  
test, or trick, or  
enrichment puzzle!

I'm YOU!



Sorry, you're fine,  
just... I'm already  
sick of this hall-  
of-mirrors shit.





Yeah.

I'm you, you're me,  
we're both a dead guy...

I think I need to just  
sit with this for a bit.

And so do you.

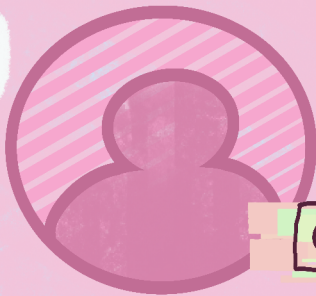


Yeah...



yeah.

Same time  
tomorrow?



Of course.

bip

2024.05.17

CALL  
ENDED

Orientation

Morgue Visitation

Interself Dialogue

► Unstructured Acclimation

Dinner

[Optional] Book Club: Journey to the West

Curfew

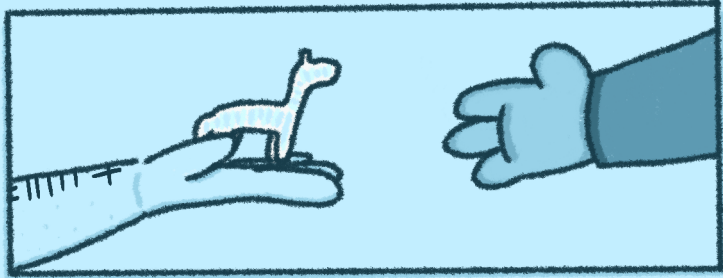
Breakfast

0111X:::







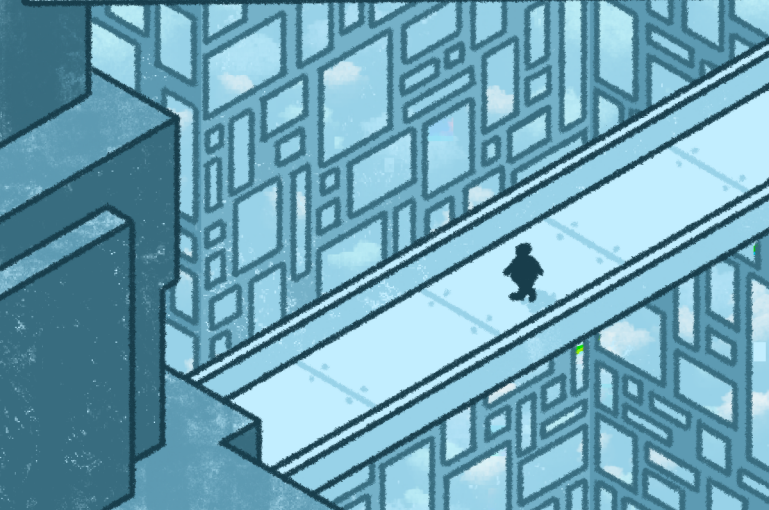


Thanks,  
Healfdane.

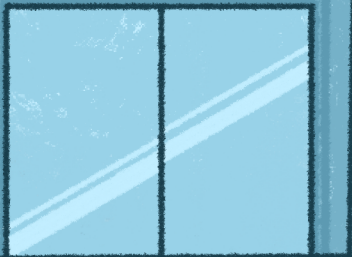


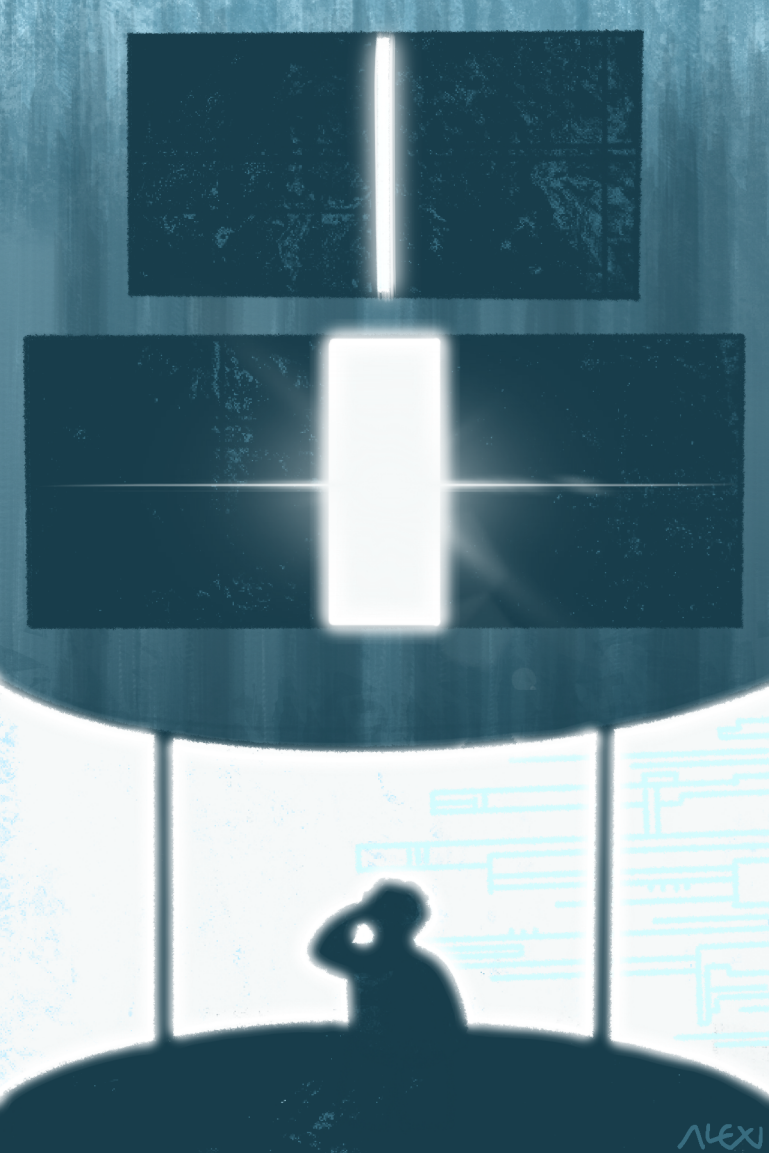


Good day,  
Markus,!

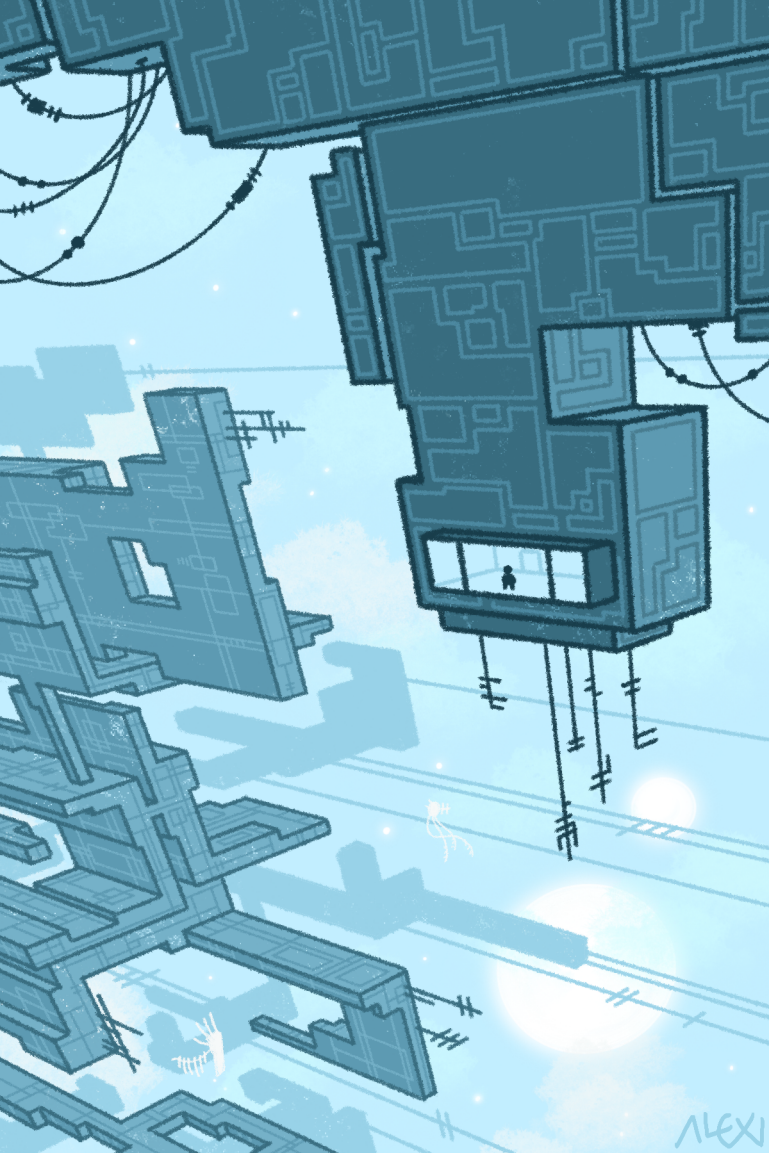




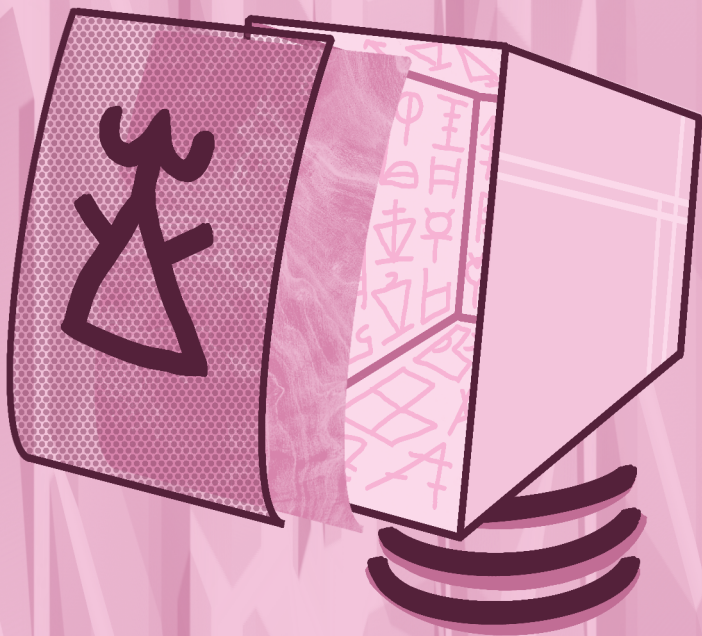




ALEXI



IXIV

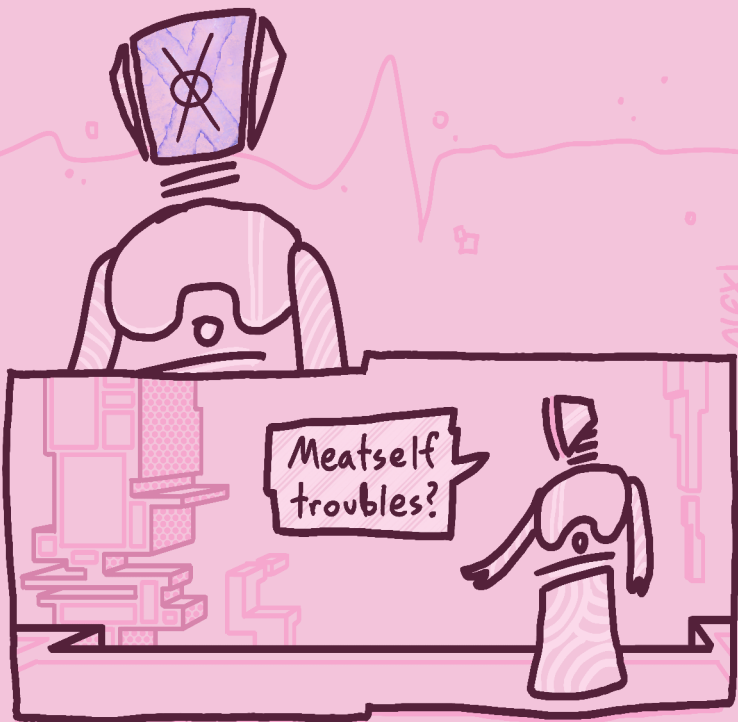


SOLIPSCISM  
SIDE B



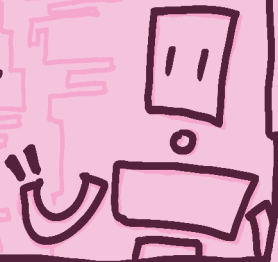
# SIDE B.



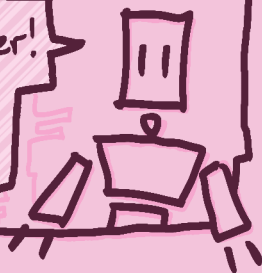


Yeah.

I'm fine if he chooses not to merge, but I want him to want that, not just flinch from it, y'know?



And I dunno if I want to, either! But I don't wanna explain our life story, or play the "saving you from yourself" card.

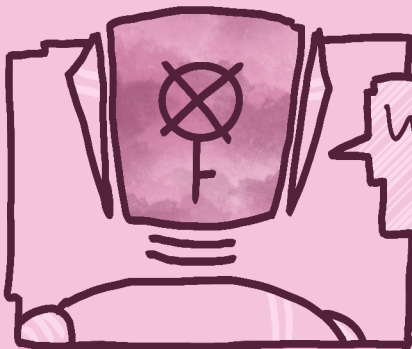


So, I wondered-

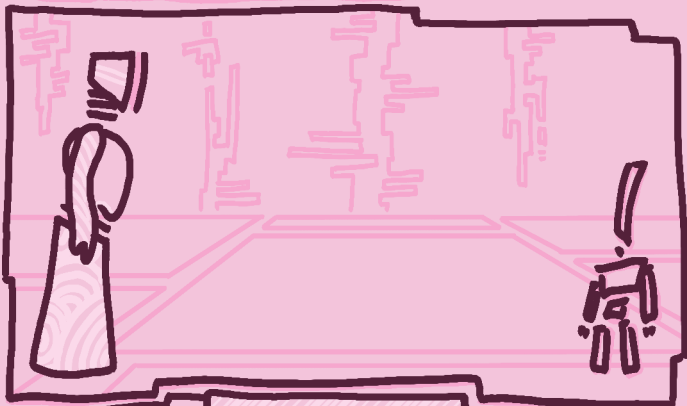
have any of your selves just... ghosted you?



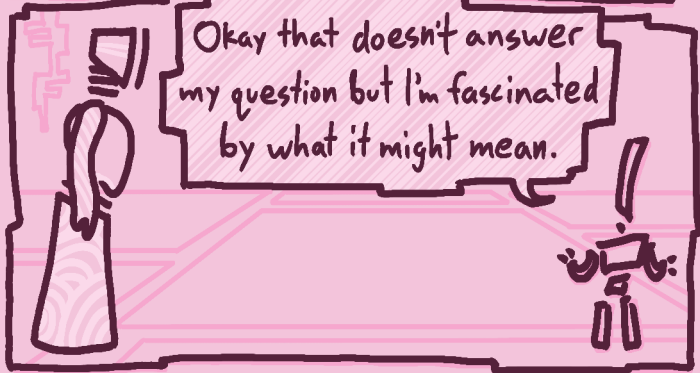
ALEX



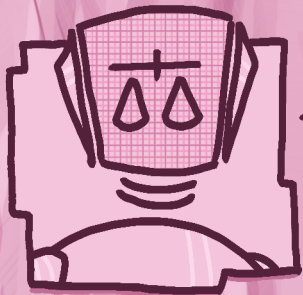
We have always  
been ghosts.



Okay that doesn't answer  
my question but I'm fascinated  
by what it might mean.







You deserve  
the truth.

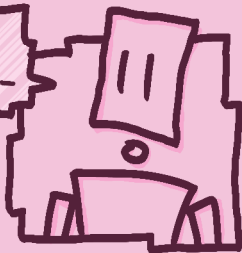
I burned  
to death.

The corpse they showed me  
cannot have been real.

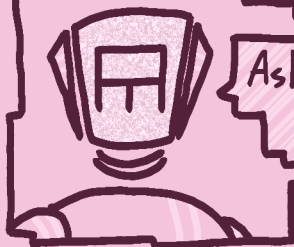


Yeah, I figured they  
were reconstructions-

From caskets, perhaps,  
but from ash?



Ash eighty centuries removed  
from our hosts' project?

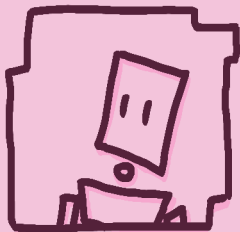


We are new ghosts  
with old names.

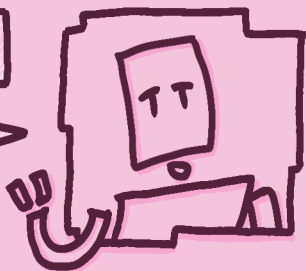
Heaven, Hel, and Asphodel  
remain unbreached.

ALEX

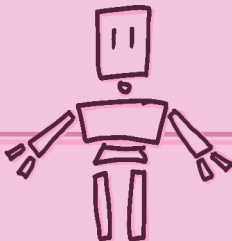
Yeah, I kinda  
figured as much.

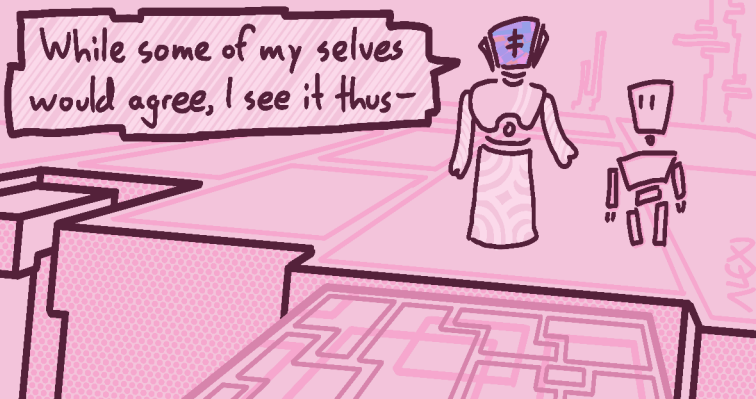


I had to give up belief  
in an afterlife for...  
a bunch of reasons.



But even if Markus is  
gone, I still wanna do  
right by him, y'know?







Ismene was my  
sister, not myself.

Yet I am a sister  
to myself.

Nothing I knew of kinship  
serves me here.

Do as you will, but you have no duty  
to the dead man whose name you bear.



HEALFDANE<sub>2</sub>

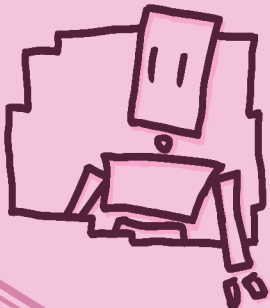


SO-YEON<sub>3</sub>



NICCOLÒ<sub>10</sub>





I get what you mean.

But if I cut all these  
ties, I'm in freefall.


5.3e9

There are worse  
places to be.

2008

next

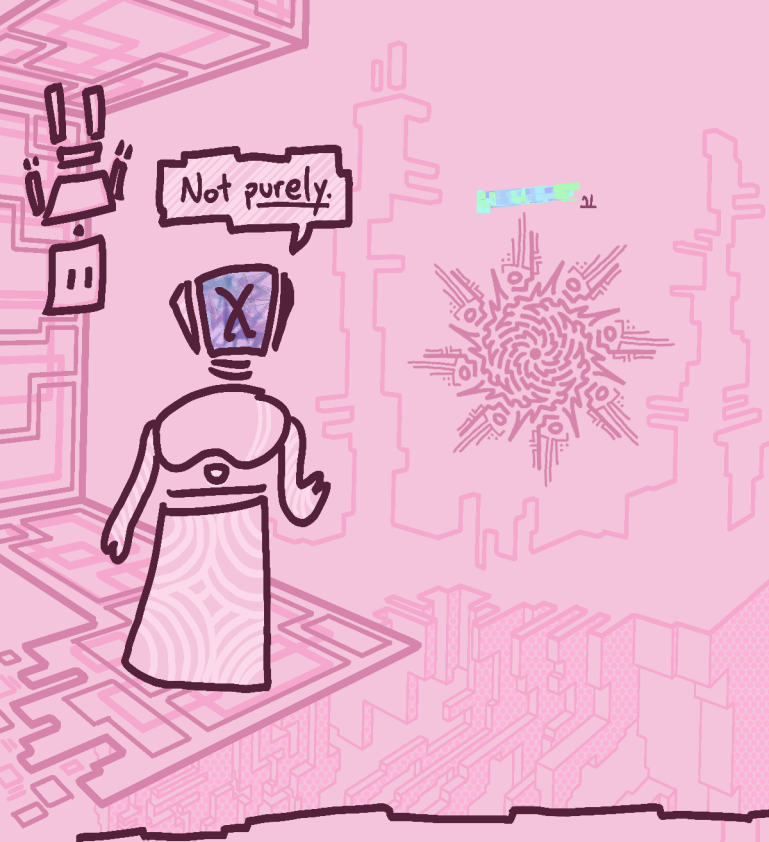




I suggest you spin off a few more  
selves with slightly shifted neurotypes  
and discuss the matter.

Oh, they'll  
love that.

"Hey, Markii three through five,  
you exist purely to help me  
through my identity crises."



Not purely.



You can help them  
in turn, become foils,  
fall in love...

Alex



As I said, nothing I knew  
of kinship applies here.





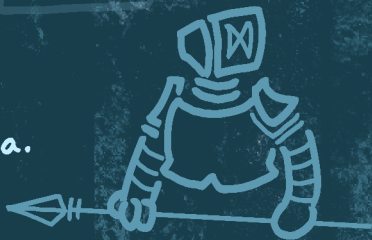
...Sure.

What are your other  
selves like, anyway?



One merged with three,  
and keeps to herself.

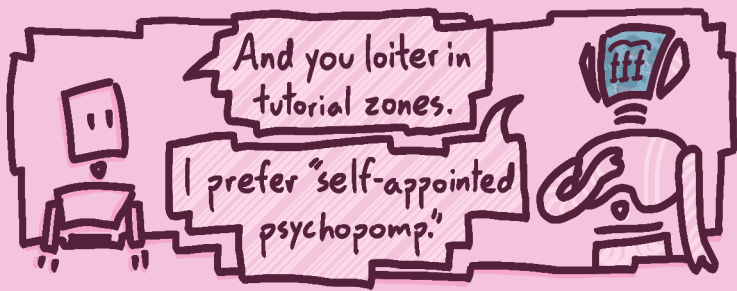
Two is having a  
splendid time in Valhalla.



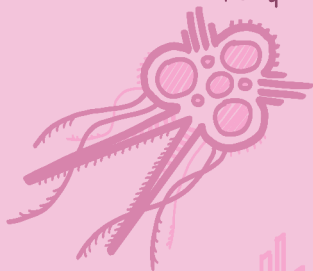
Four insists that she is  
the one true Ismene.

Five and six are  
orbiting Sirius.





YUSUFa



120v



-The Hall of the Irretrievable.

alex



Oh, I think I  
heard about this-

S'mostly early  
hominids, right?

Officially, yes.

But our hosts have never  
stopped me from expanding it.

xw93Af4  
NEOLITHIC

Qv44cF6  
ACHAEMENID  
DYNASTY

Zm...  
MESSETHIC

MEV

Even into your era, there are those  
they cannot save from entropy.



POST-ANTHROPOCENE

Can't, or won't?



ALEXI





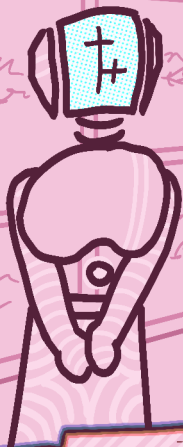
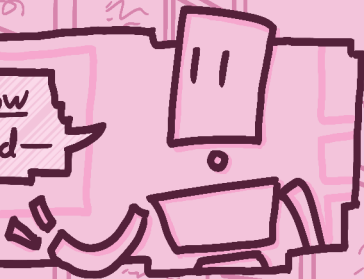
I can discuss my theories later.

I bring newcomers here with an invitation-



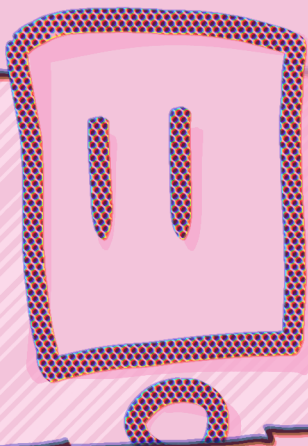
Make a tile, if you wish.

But I don't know  
who they missed—



ISMENE  
(Ἰσμήνη)  
LATE BRONZE AGE

....oh.



NEXI



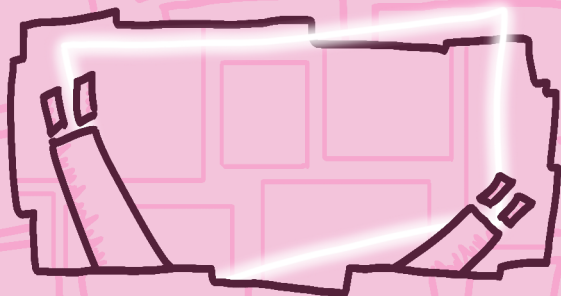
But I'm—



Are you?



ALEXI





Well, I don't feel  
any different.

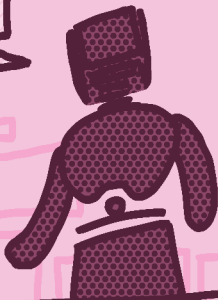


So...  
What now?

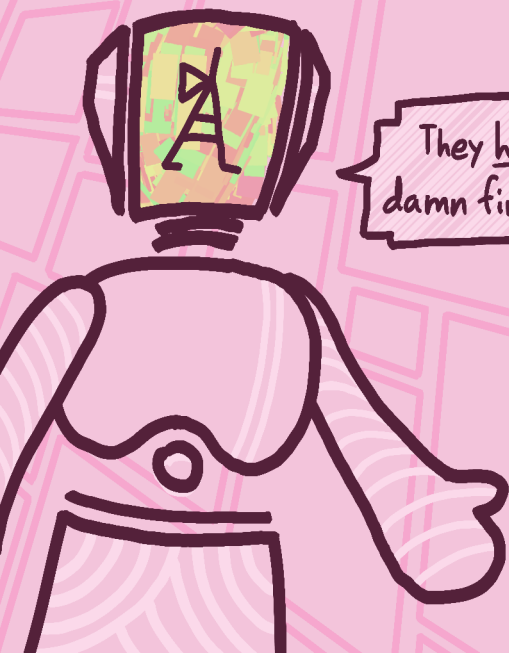




Though I cannot take our  
hosts morally seriously,



They have made a  
damn fine playground.





Yeah,  
let's go.

B  
A

ALEX

One likes to think that there is some fantastic limbo for the children of imagination, some strange, impossible place where the beaux of Fielding may still make love to the belles of Richardson, where Scott's heroes still may strut, Dickens's delightful Cockneys still raise a laugh, and Thackeray's worldlings continue their reprehensible careers. Perhaps in some humble corner of such a Valhalla, Sherlock and his Watson may for a time find a place, while some more astute sleuth with some even less astute comrade may fill the stage which they have vacated.

—Arthur Conan Doyle,  
The Case-Book of Sherlock Holmes

ALEX

MARKUS BYRON ABEJE  
(WITH A K, NEVER 'MARK')  
EARLY ANTHROPOCENE

ISMENE  
(Ἰσμήνη)  
LATE BRONZE AGE